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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Office of the Acting Chief Financial Officer and
Assistant Secretary for Administration
Washington, D.C. 20230

November 2, 2023

RE: Freedom of Information Act Request DOC-IOS-2022-001612

This letter is in response to your correspondence, dated May 12, 2022, to the Immediate Office of the Secretary Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Office. We received your request in this office on May 23, 2022, and assigned to it tracking number "DOC-IOS-2022-001612." We are responding under the FOIA to your request for:

A copy of these documents: DOC Twitter How-To Guide, DOC Rules and Policies on Personal Use of Social Media, and DOC Ethics Guidance - Use of Social Media.

Enclosed, please find three responsive documents consisting of seven pages that are responsive to your request. These records are being released in their entirety.

If you need any further assistance or would like to discuss any aspect of your request, please do not hesitate to contact the FOIA Public Liaison: Nicholas J. Cormier, Deputy Program Director, Office of Privacy and Open Government; efoia@doc.gov.

Please refer to your FOIA request tracking number, DOC-IOS-2022-001612 when contacting us. In addition, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001, e-mail at ogis@nara.gov, Telephone at 202-741-5770; toll free at 1-877-684-6448; facsimile at 202-741-5769.

Although we do not consider this a denial of your request, you have the right to appeal this FOIA determination. You may mail an administrative appeal to: Assistant General Counsel for Employment, Litigation, and Information, U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of the General Counsel, Room 5896, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20230. For a written appeal, both the letter and the appeal envelope should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal." Appeals may also be emailed to FOIAappeals@doc.gov or submitted electronically through the U.S. Department of Commerce's FOIA Public Access Link (PAL) website (if you have a PAL account) at <https://foia-pal.commerce.gov/>. Any appeal must be received within 90 calendar days from the date of this response.

Thank you for your cooperation and patience. If you have any questions, you may contact me via email at bparsons@doc.gov or by phone at 202-482-3257.

Sincerely,
ROBERTA
PARSONS

Digitally signed by
ROBERTA PARSONS
Date: 2023.11.02
10:09:02 -0400

Bobbie Parsons
FOIA Officer, Immediate Office of the Secretary
Office of Privacy and Open Government
U. S. Department of Commerce

Enclosure

Ethics Guidance USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Department of Commerce's Policy on the Approval and Use of Social Media provides guidance for Commerce employees to take full advantage of social media technologies while protecting the Department and its employees by mitigating the risks inherent in using these services without proper safeguards.

Social Media Use in a Personal Capacity

You must avoid blurring your personal and professional life when using social media and you should not establish relationships with working groups or affiliations that may reveal sensitive information about your job responsibilities.

- Do not use your Federal job title when using social media in a personal capacity, although you may use your title in a biographical sketch when it is clear that you are posting in a personal capacity, such as posting a resume or listing employment history on a social network profile such as LinkedIn®.
- Submit for review (not approval) any communication or materials you plan to post or upload on Government or non-Government websites that relates to the programs or operations of your bureau and to your official duties. The process for doing this is described in the Department's Public Communications policy, which is set forth in Department Administrative Order (DAO) 219-1, § 11.
- Do not disclose any information obtained on the job that is not already publicly available, including classified information, personally identifiable information, proprietary or business confidential information, or pre-decisional information.

Most uses of social media for political activities are fine as long as these activities take place off duty and off premises. You may not post anything on social media that contains a solicitation request for a political party, partisan political candidate, or partisan political group. You also may not post a link on social media that contains a link to the contributions page or solicitation page of a political party, partisan political candidate, or partisan political group. You may write a personal blog expressing your political opinion or expressing support for a political party, partisan political candidate, or partisan political group; however, you must not use your official title or try to bolster your opinions by including the fact that you are a Federal employee.

The Commerce Internet Use Policy allows employees to use their Government computer and social media for personal use, if access is allowed by the operating unit CIO, is minimal, and does not interfere with office operations or involve commercial profit-making purposes, partisan political activities, or sexually explicit communications. Information posted on social media platforms and web sites are available to a wide audience of users. How you present yourself on these websites will reflect on Commerce and the Government.

Social Media Use in an Official Capacity

You must use only Department-approved accounts and official e-mail or other contact information for the creation and management of official accounts.

- Post only official agency positions from Department-approved accounts (i.e., not personal opinions).
- Identify yourself with your Department affiliation and/or official title when posting a comment related to Department work to a public web site.
- Do not post personally identifiable information unless it would otherwise be released consistent with the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- Do not improperly use or post materials protected by copyright, trademark, patent, trade secret, data rights, or related protections for intellectual property. Proper use may require obtaining written permission from the owner of such information.
- Do not include surveys, polls, questionnaires, etc., on official social media platform/web 2.0 websites unless the questions have received Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Paperwork Reduction Act clearance.
- Monitor diligently any Department websites or pages that contain postings and/or responses by the public.
- Ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of posted information and allow for the correction of information not meeting that standard.
- Material posted to social media must also be posted on official Government websites. Alternative, non-electronic forms of information must be made available upon request.

Familiarize yourself with these privileges and the responsibilities of using social media and related services by reading the complete policy at this link:

http://ocio.os.doc.gov/ITPolicyandPrograms/Policy_Standards/PROD01_009476.

Personal vs. Official Governmental Social Media Accounts for Government Employees

You may maintain personal social media accounts before, during, or after government service. However, these accounts must not disclose non-public government information, be used for official communications, or be supported with government resources. They must follow all applicable federal rules (such as the Hatch Act) and Commerce Department policies.

A small number of positions (such as the Secretary and heads of bureaus) are authorized to speak on behalf of the agency in an official capacity, and thus may have separate official social media accounts. The Office of Digital Engagement oversees these accounts on behalf of the agency, in close coordination with each bureau's public affairs team.

For further questions about social media use, please start by contacting your bureau's digital staff (if available) before contacting the Office of Digital Engagement within the Office of Public Affairs, Office of the Secretary.

	Personal Account	Official Account
Account is...	tied to you as a person	tied to the government position you currently hold
Account creation...	does not require prior approval	requires prior approval and subsequent government registration
Subject matter is...	of a personal nature (family events, hobbies, etc.)	public communications from a position authorized to speak on behalf of the government
Content is created...	by you personally	by you or your employees as part of official government duties
Content is posted...	on a personal device during personal time	on a government device during official duty hours
Content ownership...	belongs to you	belongs to the government as an official work product , not subject to copyright

Key Federal Rules and Regulations		
Hatch Act	applies	applies
Prohibition on Endorsements (5 C.F.R. § 2635.702)	applies	applies
Federal Records Act	does not apply <i>[if above criteria are met, does not qualify as a Federal Record]</i>	applies
Appropriations prohibition on publicity or propaganda	does not apply <i>[if above criteria are met, does not qualify as using appropriated government resources]</i>	applies

To Get Started Using an Official Account

Contact:

1) Your bureau staff, if available.

2) Abigail Bowman
Deputy Director of Digital Engagement

Abowman@doc.gov

The Office of Digital Engagement can help you determine whether you are authorized to use a pre-existing official account (or connect you to the digital team in your bureau).

They can also brief you on the government resources available to make our official social media accounts an effective public communication tool and a smart use of government resources.

Personal vs. Official Governmental Social Media Accounts for Government Employees

Official Accounts and Agency Accounts

If your position is not authorized to have an official account, the agency or bureau accounts are a great way to share our activities with our audience.

Many bureaus have established bureau-wide social media accounts (such as @USPTO for the United States Patent and Trademark Office, or @CommerceGov for all of Commerce) with large social media followings. These accounts provide a mix of bureau information from multiple authors

and messages from leadership (such as links to speeches or press releases). These accounts provide a pre-existing platform and audience from day one.

Bureau or agency-wide accounts are preferred as they provide one source of information for the public while also avoiding any confusion between a personal account and an official account.

We are continually preparing and planning content for the agency and bureau accounts for the next 2 week - 2 months period. If you have ideas for content, you can reach out to your bureau's digital staff or the DOC Office of Digital Engagement staff.

Is this account a personal account or a professional one?

Official Account



YES	Is your current government title a primary identifier?	NO
YES	Is the content primarily about your official duties?	NO
YES	Are government resources (time, staff, equipment) being used to create this content?	NO

Personal Account



Using Twitter for Official Duties at the Department of Commerce

You should use Twitter to connect with and inform your audiences and clients, extend the reach of your bureau's existing messaging, provide an informal human voice to your office or program's role and help your bureau achieve its mission.

Using Twitter in an official capacity is subject to the same rules, regulations and requirements that exist for all other communications and activities as well the [Department of Commerce's Social Media policy](#).

To help you better learn what Twitter is and how it can be used, the Office of Public Affairs suggests establishing your own personal account, following people that talk about topics that interest you and are unconnected to your official role or work (eg personal friends, college sports, cooking & dining, etc) and simply watching, reading, and clicking for a while. This will let you see how others use Twitter in the context of things you know and care about. When you reach your comfort level, begin to engage with other Twitter users and learn some more. This should be a much more comfortable environment to learn in than an official account.

When you are ready to start Tweeting in your official capacity, the following best practices should help you be effective and stay within established limits.

Applying for a Twitter Account

- Twitter accounts must be applied for through the Department of Commerce Social Media Application process at: <https://socmed.my.commerce.gov/>.

Requirements

- Multiple individuals must be able to access, post to and/or delete from all official Twitter accounts at any time.
- Use an office e-mail address, rather than a personal address. For example, The Office of Digital Strategy generally uses webmaster@doc.gov. Using a personal account (i.e. Bob-Smith@DOC.gov) can lead to complications when the account holder leaves DOC.
- OPA will monitor official Twitter accounts on a spot basis to ensure compliance with the guidance in this document. If compliance with the guidance in this document is not maintained, OPA may revoke approval for Twitter accounts and/or disable, deactivate, and close non-compliant accounts.

Best Practices

Do:

- The 140-character limit forces us to be pithy, clear and catchy. Have some fun and be personable with phrasing, but always in good taste. If in doubt whether your words may cross the line, ask a colleague for a second opinion.
- Try to stay at least 10-20 characters below the 140-character limit—this facilitates retweeting (see below), which requires enough characters beyond the original tweet to include your @username (plus "RT" and a space, if they are manually retweeting you). It also allows for comment. Think "120 is the new 140."

January 30, 2013

- Tweet as often as you are comfortable and have something to say.
- Content is king: provide information, insight, and clarification.
- Respond to questions, but stick to your area of expertise. People might ask you questions you can't answer; refer them to someone who can.
- Respond to complaints if you can help someone, but avoid arguing with people trying to bait you (referred to as "trolls" on the Internet).
- Reply and retweet – the more you engage, the more people will respect you. See the sections below for specific guidance.
- Solicit tweet suggestions from others in your office who are knowledgeable about your subject.
- Phrase questions so that they are open ended - ask for thoughts or ideas.
- Link to more in-depth content, such as a webpage, podcast, news release, etc. Use GSA's go.usa.gov or Bit.ly's URL shortener for .gov links. OPA can help you create a go.usa.gov account.
- Cover only one point and provide only one link per tweet. To direct people to more comprehensive information, link to a page that then links to multiple pages.
- Check your spelling. You can't correct errors. While there is an option to delete your tweets, they aren't really deleted.

Don't:

- Tweet about things you wouldn't talk about under other circumstances (same as email: if you don't want to see it on the front page of the newspaper, don't tweet it).
- Lobby, promote political viewpoints, or endorse commercial products or services.
- Procrastinate about whether to tweet. Timeliness matters.
- Be the sole source of non-temporal information. "The doors to [*big trade event*] are about to open" is okay, "We export 300% more widgets than China" is not if we don't have published data that supports the claim.
- Argue, push personal opinions, or get into long-running debates.
- Let your account languish.

Following other accounts

- Follow some of Commerce's other accounts:
<https://twitter.com/CommerceGov/bureaus/members>
- Following your colleagues, @CommerceSec, and @CommerceGov is ideal but not required.
- Follow any official U.S. Government accounts that you wish. The more closely those accounts focus on your subject areas, the better for everyone.
- If you wish to follow non-U.S. Government accounts, such as subject matter experts and thought leaders, establish criteria for what you will and won't follow. Document that criteria and use it. When in doubt, seek guidance from Commerce's Director of Digital Strategy.
- Do not follow candidate, election, campaign or other political accounts.
- Review the accounts you follow from time to time. If no longer valuable, stop following. Keep a record of what you've decided and why.

Retweeting

- Retweet (repost someone else's tweet) posts that are relevant to your subject, even from accounts outside DOC or ITA. Copy and paste the tweet into the Twitter update box, preceded by typing RT, (a space) (@sign) and the originator account name. For example:
 - RT @WhiteHouse Exports are growing and supporting more jobs.
<http://go.usa.gov/randomcharacters>

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- You can also use the retweet function built into Twitter. Keep in mind that you can't edit the tweet if you use this function.
- If the retweet exceeds the 140-character limit, it's okay to slightly shorten the original tweet—provided you don't in any way change its meaning. You can use "MT" for modified tweet to show that you made modifications.
- If enough characters are available, you may include a short comment about the retweet by adding a dash at the end and typing your comment. For example:
 - RT @TradeGov New report on trade benefits released <http://go.usa.gov/randomcharacters> - [Wiget producers] can see fun facts about your industry here!

Or

- Watch this before attending a trade show! RT @ExportGov new video: "Why You Should Attend Trade Shows" <http://go.usa.gov/randomcharacters>
- Don't claim another's tweet as your own – if you're retweeting use the RT!

Replying

- Public comments to you will begin with @[your account name]; you can find them by clicking on the "@Connect" tab along the top of your Twitter homepage.
- For a public reply, click the "reply" link under the tweet or begin your tweet with the @ sign and the account name you're replying to.
- Twitter provides a direct message feature similar to email. It is private and not public. This feature only works for people who follow you and you follow. NEVER USE THIS FEATURE. Your communication should be in public. If you need to follow up in a private manner, please direct them to contact you via email or phone. Never ask a follower to put their personally-identifiable information in a tweet.

What is the # for?

- The # plus the word following it is called a **hashtag**. A hashtag is a word or acronym used to describe a tweet in order for people to easily follow the conversation. People attach these terms to their tweets so when others search for a trend, category, or event, relevant tweets will appear. For example, **#patent** will provide references to tweets dealing with patents, **#sb44** referred to Superbowl 44, **#ipad** refers to Apple's iPad, and **#gfail** is often used when Gmail is down.

What are those short web links?

- If you're sharing a link on Twitter, you're limited to 140 characters. A URL weblink can quickly eat up those characters and limit our actual message. A shortened URL such as <http://ow.ly/3qT9o> or <http://go.usa.gov/1u7> saves space.
- Even better, they allow us to easily track how many people are clicking the link. That lets us better analyze how many people are taking action on a communication/message we put out.

Questions?

Please contact Mike Kruger, Director of Digital Strategy, at mkruger@doc.gov